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Chair

The Honourable Larry Bagnell

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● (1100)

[*English*]

The Chair (Hon. Larry Bagnell (Yukon, Lib.)): I'd like to welcome Bob Zimmer, and I want to abuse my authority as chair to ask everyone to join the outdoor caucus, which Bob chairs.

This morning, we pursue our study of use of indigenous languages in proceedings of the House of Commons.

We are pleased to be joined by Malcolm Williams, co-chair, board of examiners from the Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council.

By video conference from Edinburgh we are happy to have the following officials from the Scottish Parliament: Ruth Connelly, head of broadcasting; Linda Orton, head of public information and resources; and Bronwyn Brady, sub-editor, *Official Report*.

We're also receiving a written submission from the U.K. Parliament about the use of Welsh. They didn't want to come on video; they're going to send it in.

Next Tuesday we're studying e-petitions in the first hour; and in the second hour, we are drafting instructions on indigenous languages to the House. We may have the subcommittee's report on sexual conduct between members.

We'll turn it over to our witnesses now.

We'll start with Ms. Brady from the Scottish Parliament. Thank you for taking the time to appear before us today.

Ms. Bronwyn Brady (Sub-Editor, Official Report, Scottish Parliament): You're very welcome. Thank you for asking us to talk to you.

I thought we would start just by giving you a bit of social and political context for Gaelic in the Scottish Parliament. It all starts with the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005. That's an act that establishes a body that has "functions exercisable with a view to securing the status of the Gaelic language as an official language of Scotland commanding equal respect to the English language". The functions of that body include preparing a national Gaelic language plan, requiring public authorities to prepare and publish Gaelic language plans in connection with the exercise of their functions and to maintain and implement such plans, and issuing guidance in relation to Gaelic education.

That body is known as Bòrd na Gàidhlig, and it takes the lead in identifying actions that it believes are likely to support the use, the learning, and the promotion of Gaelic.

The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, which is our legal identity, is the named public authority in the Gaelic language act, which means that we have a duty to prepare a Gaelic language plan. We've just submitted the latest version of that to Bòrd na Gàidhlig. Its main aims are stated as setting out how we will use Gaelic in community outreach, how we will support MSPs and staff to develop confidence in using Gaelic, and how we will integrate Gaelic into the fabric of the Parliament's thinking.

The main responsibility for facilitating the implementation of that plan sits with the head of our outreach services. In addition, we've got two Gaelic officers who provide support for Gaelic in the Parliament and in parliamentary outreach.

You can see that we're in an environment that is very supportive of the use of Gaelic. However, it's not new. It's not only since the 2005 act. When the Scottish Parliament was established in 1999, the standing orders were written to say that the Parliament shall normally conduct its business in English but members may speak in Scots Gaelic or in any other language with the agreement of the presiding officer.

Those bare bones of the standing orders are filled out by the Parliament's language policy, and that provides the detail for how we will implement our ambitions to support the use of Gaelic in parliamentary business. More recently, the Parliament took a further step and passed the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act 2015, which places similar obligations on us to support the use of BSL.

Linda Orton, who is the head of public information and resources, can talk about the language policy and the interpretation contract. Ruth Connelly, who's our head of broadcasting, can talk about the services we need to provide, including technical facilities, to support multilingual parliamentary business. If you have any questions about the *Official Report*, which is what we call our *Hansard*, and it includes Gaelic, I'd be happy to answer those.

Thank you.

● (1105)

The Chair: Thank you.

Are there any further opening remarks from the other two?

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: Not at this stage.

The Chair: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Williams, go ahead. Maybe in your opening remarks, you can explain your organization and what it does.

Mr. Malcolm Williams (Co-Chair, Board of Examiners, Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council): That's essentially what I'm going to do.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As was already stated, I am the co-chair of the Board of Examiners of the Canadian Translators, Terminologists and Interpreters Council. That would indicate to you that we have an examination process. Our main job is to certify language professionals.

CTTIC, our organization, is a national umbrella organization, representing professional associations in seven provinces—B.C., Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. PEI and Newfoundland and Labrador do not have a professional translators and interpreters association, nor do the territories. There was a professional association in Nunavut up to a few years ago, but to our knowledge that organization is no longer in existence. We have had discussions with representatives of the Nunavut government regarding certification of Inuktitut translators and interpreters, but those discussions are in the very, very early stage.

Regulation of occupations is within provincial jurisdiction, so it is our seven provincial affiliates that are responsible for certifying individuals. We certify individual language professionals, not companies. We certify them as professional translators, for written interlingual communication; interpreters, for spoken interlingual communication; and terminologists, in the interest of protecting the public. Interpreters can be certified as conference, community, medical, or court interpreters. Certification provides a reasonable insurance that the language professional will produce reliable work.

In the case of four provincial associations—those in B.C., Ontario, Quebec, and New Brunswick—provincial legislation confers upon certified members reserved title, meaning that only members in good standing of those associations can call themselves "certified" professionals. Under a reciprocity agreement, certification is portable from province to province, so I, as a certified member of ATIO, can apply to become a member of the B.C. association without having to re-sit any exams. Note, however, that the provincial associations do not have exclusive jurisdiction. Any individual or group in Canada can set up shop as a translation or interpretation service provider. As a result, many translators and interpreters may not see the benefits of certification. Note also that a number of other agencies across the country claim to accredit or certify language professionals and that many employers administer their own recruitment tests.

Now I'm going to talk about conference interpreting in the broad frame. Conference interpreters typically work in soundproof booths —there they are right there—providing simultaneous interpretation, with very little lag time between the delivery of the speech and the actual interpretation. They work primarily for conferences and legislative assemblies, with the Canadian Parliament, New Brunswick, and Manitoba being current examples of that. The work involves interpreting from language A, that of the speaker, to language B, that of some or all participants in the assembly, meeting, or conference.

The interpreters working for Parliament, our colleagues over here, are highly trained. A master's degree in conference interpreting from the University of Ottawa, York University, or a recognized university program in another country is now required. Most graduates also have first degrees in translation. Conference interpreters working at the Manitoba legislature are all certified by the Manitoba professional association.

I'll talk a little bit about our master's degree in conference interpreting. The University of Ottawa's master's program is an intensive full-time one, lasting 10 months. It is designed to train interpreters working in the two official languages. The program does not provide instruction in foreign language or indigenous language interpreting. The program is a demanding one for good reason. First, the clients—you, Parliament, and other federal institutions—are high-profile, so the consequences of error can be significant. Second, what the interpreter delivers is the finished product. There is no opportunity to revise, edit, or otherwise refine the product before the listener receives the message.

● (1110)

Now I'll talk about community and medical interpreting, which is a different type of occupation. Community interpreters ensure communication understanding among the speakers of different languages, often by interpreting from language A to language B, and vice versa, within the same dialogue. The context may be social services, education, health care, or interaction with the legal system. Typical situations include medical appointments for immigrant families, meetings of school staff with immigrant children and their parents, visits by social workers, health professionals speaking to seniors and persons with disabilities, meetings at community centres regarding housing for families and services for immigrant women, and meetings between attorneys and refugee claimants. Listening to the client or service provider and then relaying the information or question to the other party is the community and medical interpreter's role.

Unlike the conference interpreter, the community interpreter is observable and participates in the dialogue. As noted earlier, interpreters can become officially specialized as provincially certified community or medical interpreters. However, as the aforementioned list of typical assignments illustrates, community interpreters in any case require knowledge of concepts and a vocabulary of specialized fields.

In Ontario, many take courses in legal and medical terminology offered by community colleges and by a dozen agencies making up the Ontario network of language interpreter services, and these agencies are authorized by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship. In B. C., Simon Fraser University offers medical interpreting training in several Asian languages, and some private interpretation companies offer training to help people obtain certification. Regarding academic qualification for community and medical interpreters, a university degree is not a requirement, but most interpreters in the medical field community do have one.

There are other accreditation and certification bodies. The Ontario Council on Community Interpreting accredits community interpreters. Cultural Interpretation Services for Our Communities, an organization based in Ottawa, certifies health interpreters in over 60 languages, but not indigenous languages; and community colleges such as Humber College, in Toronto, offer a language interpreter training certificate.

Finally, on court interpreting, our provincial affiliates provide testing and certification in all these different kinds of interpreting. Court interpreters are typically located beside the judges' bench, interpret questions, answers, testimony, and other statements in court cases at the provincial level. CTTIC and its affiliates offer court interpreter certification. The Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General runs exams to accredit court interpreters for their purposes. In B.C., however, the Ministry of the Attorney General encourages court interpreters to become certified through our provincial affiliate.

Court interpretive training in Ontario is provided by a number of agencies. In B.C, Simon Fraser, again, offers legal interpreting courses, as does our provincial affiliate.

Finally, I have a few words on our actual certification procedures. To be eligible to apply for certification in translation or interpreting from a provincial association—one of our affiliates—candidates must demonstrate an acceptable combination of academic qualifications, in most cases, a degree in translation or modern languages, along with two years of professional experience, or five years of professional experience.

There are two main routes to certification: by examination, and by what we call "on dossier". In the interest of uniformity and efficiency, the national body, CTTIC, organizes annual certification exams in translation, community interpreting, medical interpreting, and court interpreting. Translation exams are offered in many language combinations, from and to English and French. Community, medical, and court interpreting exams are offered in about 10 language combinations. No exams have been run for a language combination including an indigenous language.

For on dossier certification, you don't have to go through the exams; you can go through this other process. Candidates must provide proof of experience, the number of words translated, or years of interpreting, samples of their work, and references. In the case of conference interpreters in New Brunswick, for example, five years of full-time conference interpreting, or a master's degree in conference interpreting, plus two years of full-time experience are the eligibility requirements. Conference interpreters can obtain certification by another route, by passing the federal government translation bureau's freelance interpreter accreditation exam.

● (1115)

Thank you.

The Chair: *Mahsi cho. Gunalcheesh.*

Now we'll go to Mr. Simms for questions.

Mr. Scott Simms (Coast of Bays—Central—Notre Dame, Lib.): Ms. Brady, for the record—and this is very important to me—last year, I had the honour of being in the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood. I really enjoyed it. It's a beautiful building. It's well adapted. We have many things to learn from that Parliament as far as modern parliaments go, including languages. I even have my Scottish pin, which they were nice enough to give me. I don't know if that curries their favour but I just thought...

The Chair: Your time is running out.

Mr. Scott Simms: That would be my life story, Mr. Chair.

I want to get to a couple of things that you mentioned in your presentation.

To support MSPs, members of the Scottish Parliament, and staff to develop confidence in using Gaelic and integrate Gaelic into the fabric of the Parliament's thinking.... You're very interested and eager for them not only to speak it but also to learn it. You've integrated this into the daily proceedings.

How do you do that? If I were to say to you that I'm an MSP and I want to learn Gaelic, do I have to call someone in advance to conduct a speech within the Parliament itself?

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: Yes, you do.

At the moment, we have a limited number of MSPs who can speak Gaelic, and we ask for notification before they speak simply so we can provide the right infrastructure for them. We can make sure we have interpreters, and that the transcription of the speech can happen.

Mr. Scott Simms: Is it requested that whenever someone speaks in Gaelic, they have to notify or can I just get up and freely speak Gaelic and expect it to be translated into English?

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: No, because we don't have interpreters on hand. If you want to make a substantial contribution in Gaelic, then we ask that you notify us so that interpretation provision can be made because if you make a speech in Gaelic, you'll be speaking largely to yourself as things stand at the moment.

● (1120)

Members can and do have the odd sentence in Gaelic. That's fine. We can manage that. But to make it so they can participate properly in debate, we ask for notification and it's simply because the call on the resources would be very infrequent, I suppose. To maintain a bank of interpreters to be on hand for every debate just wouldn't be useful.

Mr. Scott Simms: It's infrequent.

Just to follow up on that—this will be my final question to you—rule 7.1.1 says, "The Parliament shall normally conduct its business in English but members may speak in Scots Gaelic or in any other language with the agreement of the Presiding Officer".

Are there any limitations on that or is it any language? Can I call someone and say I want to do this in Spanish?

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: Yes, you can. Not so very long ago, one of our ministers gave a speech in Norwegian, a language that she had just learned and wanted to demonstrate to all of us. It does literally mean any language.

Again notification is required because if we couldn't find an interpreter for that language, we might go back to the person and tell them if they speak it, no one will understand what they're saying because we can't find anyone to interpret it. But fundamentally yes, there is no restriction on language.

Mr. Scott Simms: It seems to me there's an expansive program to encourage people to speak Gaelic.

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: Yes, there is.

Mr. Scott Simms: Thank you very much.

Mr. Williams, I've been in the Council of Europe for several years, and I've noticed when you sit in the assembly there, seven languages are available to people who want to understand that language.

My understanding is there are two relay languages there. Can you explain this concept? Obviously going from one language to the other is easier to do in the more general languages, but would I be right in saying there are relay languages and then there are major languages?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: For the major languages, yes. It could go from Slovenian to English, and then from English to one of the other —

Mr. Scott Simms: I'm sorry. I don't mean to cut you off, but I don't have a lot of time.

Let's bring this in domestically: if you're in a situation in which there are several languages, including Cree and other dialects, how would that work here?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: You could transpose that model, if that's what you're suggesting.

Mr. Scott Simms: The relay languages would be French and English?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: That's right.

Mr. Scott Simms: Right, and to do that, it would be.... I'm having a hard time understanding how that works, only because I'm not an interpreter.

Mr. Malcolm Williams: Nor am I, by the way.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay, but you certainly have a better understanding. The other day we heard about a conference that takes place in northern Quebec. If you were to do that, how would that work for us? Let's put it that way, in the sense—

Mr. Malcolm Williams: You would have interpreters in separate booths, soundproofed, listening to the speaker who is speaking in Cree, for example. The person in the English booth would interpret into English, and then the person in the French booth would go from English to French.

Mr. Scott Simms: Okay. For those going to English, it would be straight into English, if English were the relay language.

Mr. Malcolm Williams: That's right.

Mr. Scott Simms: I assume that English is a popular relay language around the world. Is that correct?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: It would be number one.

Mr. Scott Simms: It would be the number one language, primarily. Would French be considered a relay language, or we're just duplicating...?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: French, yes, certainly in Europe, and German as well, in Europe.

Mr. Scott Simms: The qualifications for interpreters are something very important—

The Chair: You have five seconds.

Mr. Scott Simms: I want to say thank you to all the guests who are joining us by video conference. It was nice to speak to you. Thanks for the pen.

The Chair: Mr. Richards.

Mr. Blake Richards (Banff—Airdrie, CPC): I had some similar questions, so maybe Mr. Simms will get his answer. You never know.

Mr. Williams, I might have missed this, but how many interpreters belong to your various constituent associations? I don't know if you mentioned that.

● (1125)

Mr. Malcolm Williams: It varies. I can give you some total numbers. The B.C. association has 400 members, the Ontario association has 700, and New Brunswick has 250. I would say that between a fifth and a quarter of those would be interpreters of various kinds.

Mr. Blake Richards: Okay. This is where I get to my colleague's potential question in terms of the qualifications.

You did mention some of the qualifications in terms of the certification. You mentioned that it's generally a degree and two years or five years of experience.

Mr. Malcolm Williams: That's right.

Mr. Blake Richards: How is that experience generally gathered and what other qualifications might there be that are generally expected?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: Normally, for the on dossier certification process, we would expect candidates to submit a log of their work over the target number of years: where you did do your—

Mr. Blake Richards: It's about the types of work as well.

Mr. Malcolm Williams: Yes.

Mr. Blake Richards: In order to do some of the work that is expected of your associations, they obviously have to gain experience in other ways. What's typical?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: They'd have to indicate what kinds of assignments they were involved in. For the community interpreter, for example, I gave that long list. There are medical visits and visits by social workers.

Mr. Blake Richards: Okay. That was actually the type of work that would be required to get the experience, not just what they do—

Mr. Malcolm Williams: That's right, absolutely.

Mr. Blake Richards: Okay—

Mr. Malcolm Williams: I'm sorry for interrupting you, but as I said, certification is not a requirement in Canada. It's a nice thing to have, but it's not a requirement.

Mr. Blake Richards: Got it.

How many interpreters within your association work with indigenous languages? What percentage or what number?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: None.

Mr. Blake Richards: None? Okay.

Can you tell me a bit more about the proportion of the assignments? You mentioned a number of the different assignments that you do, whether it be court work, etc. Can you tell me a bit more about the proportion who would work with health care assignments, say, or government assignments, or justice- and court-related assignments?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: I hesitate to give a percentage, but a significant proportion would involve health care and visits with physicians, and a significant portion would also involve attorneys with immigrant or refugee families.

Mr. Blake Richards: Those would be the two main ones, then; you're quite certain of that. I know you're hesitant to give a percentage, but would they be in the majority? Would they be more than 50% between the two of them?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: It would be in the 40% range, but that is really a guesstimate, and that's just for community and medical interpreting. I'm not talking about conference interpreting.

Mr. Blake Richards: It might not be fair to ask you this, given that you have no indigenous interpretation under your association. You might have some familiarity though, so I'll just ask you, and if you don't have the expertise that's fine. Would you know if the same patterns and proportions would exist with indigenous interpretation?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: Knowing I was going to be at this meeting, our Manitoba representative did some research. He came back to me two days ago, informing me that community medical interpretation services in indigenous languages in Manitoba are managed by an agency called Indigenous Health. The main languages interpreted there are Cree and Ojibwa, so that would be very much in a community interpreting environment. He also informed me that Nunavut manages a centre for Inuit needing health care services in Winnipeg. That centre provides interpreting services in Inuktitut.

Mr. Blake Richards: Do you know, in terms of their interpreters, what percentage would be involved with those medical services?

● (1130)

Mr. Malcolm Williams: No, I have no numbers on that.

Mr. Blake Richards: Okay. We've obviously been talking about various types of interpretation methods: relay interpretation, remote interpretation, and a couple of those things. I know they're generally not considered ideal situations by interpreters, obviously. I want to get your opinions on that, and whether that's something we should or should not look at and why.

Mr. Malcolm Williams: They're not ideal, but why not look at it? Remote interpreting is becoming very popular.

Mr. Blake Richards: What do you see as the challenges in that?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: I still go back to the question beyond the technical aspect, which is of the certification itself. How are you going to guarantee quality interpreting? That is a question that should be asked.

Mr. Blake Richards: All right. I was going to go to our Scottish officials, but with the 45 seconds I have left, we wouldn't even get started.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Saganash, please.

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our guests.

I want to start with the Scottish Parliament. I wanted to ask the question Mr. Simms asked about rule 7.1.1, so I got the answer for that.

The other question I have is about that notification requirement. How much time is that? Is that a 24-hour or 48-hour notification that you require?

Ms. Linda Orton (Head of Public Information and Resources, Scottish Parliament): Hello. I'm Linda Orton. I'm head of Public Information, and it's part of my remit to find the interpreters.

We use an external contractor who has access to any language we might request. Generally speaking, we like two weeks' notice, I'm afraid. We need that long-term notice, really.

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Williams, I listened to your enumeration of your provincial affiliates. Was Quebec part of it?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: Quebec is not part of our—

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Is there a particular reason for that?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: Quebec was a member until 2011, and then decided to go its own way. Only Quebec can tell you why.

Mr. Romeo Saganash: All right.

You also talked about the certification requirements you have for different provinces and interpreters and translators. Public Works and Government Services informed us on Tuesday of this week that they have a list of 100 indigenous interpreters who can interpret some 20 languages. Would you recommend that these people become members of your council?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: It would be great if you could encourage them to do so, yes.

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Would they have to go through the same certification requirements as your other members?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: It would be through either examination or on dossier. If they have a number of years' experience and then provide references, we could certify them.

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Was that part of your discussions with Nunavut?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: We haven't even gotten to that point yet; it's just very, very initial. I've sent them an outline of our certification procedures, and I'm waiting for them to get back to us on that.

Mr. Romeo Saganash: But that definitely would be desirable.

Mr. Malcolm Williams: I think so.

What I was trying to get across was the fact that you have these myriad agencies all accrediting and certifying language professionals. That should be harmonized in some way.

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Okay.

That's it for me, Mr. Chair.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): We will move to Mr. Graham.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham (Laurentides—Labelle, Lib.): Thank you.

Ms. Orton, you said there's a two-week notice period to use Gaelic in the House. I assume that applies to all languages other than English?

● (1135)

Ms. Linda Orton: Generally, yes. That would be preferable, yes.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: What is the issue for that length of delay? Is it the lack of available interpreters who are qualified? What causes such a long delay?

Ms. Linda Orton: It's mostly that, and certainly for Gaelic. There are only four or five Gaelic interpreters we're able to use, so trying to book them in advance is a good idea.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Are other languages and dialects in Scotland ever used in the chamber?

Ms. Linda Orton: The most important one at the moment is British Sign Language. We are in the process of putting together a British Sign Language plan, which is encouraging more use and more engagement with the BSL community. It's likely that we will be increasing the number of occasions when BSL is interpreted in the chamber. Currently, there are more BSL interpreters than Gaelic in the chamber.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Are you seeing a positive impact on Gaelic from this program—or, with the long delays, are people reticent about actually using it?

Ms. Linda Orton: I don't think that's the problem. I think the problem is that possibly there are fewer MSPs who are fluent in Gaelic. There are only two.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Two: that is quite few.

Ms. Linda Orton: Yes.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: I understand. We are facing the same situation with the indigenous languages here in terms of the number who speak it. But it's a chicken-and-egg problem: if you provide the languages, perhaps you can get more people who speak it in the chamber.

Anyway, thank you for that. I want to go to Mr. Williams for a few minutes. I may come back to you, if I have the time.

We've talked about relay languages a little bit. If you remember the advent of translation services on the Internet, when you translated from one language to another and then back, the message was often completely changed. What kinds of challenges do you face in relay translation reliability-wise?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: We'd be facing exactly the same challenges.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: If you translated from English to French, and then had a relay translation back to English, would it be significantly different?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: Again, it depends on the quality of the interpreter.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Fair enough.

Many interpreters have told me that if they'd had to use me for certification, they wouldn't be certified. I just want to put that on the record.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: One thing that's come up here a bit is the idea of providing written translated text to interpreters to read into the record for the languages that could not otherwise be translated in an efficient manner. We've been told that there is an ethical issue with this. Do you have codes of ethics or things like it that you could share with us?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: Each provincial association has its own code of ethics.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Would it be possible for you to share those—whatever you can get your hands on—with the committee?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: I can send you the links.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: I appreciate that. Thank you.

I'm going to go back to Scotland for a second.

You mentioned that there are only two speakers of Gaelic and that you've had Norwegian spoken. What other languages have been tried, and when did it first happen?

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: We've had a lot of languages used in the Chamber. When a language is used that isn't one that we support, as it were, such that we won't put it into the record, what we do is report the English interpretation. We've had witnesses giving evidence in Czech, in German, and in French, and we've had members in the Chamber offering small bits of speeches. We used to fairly regularly have a debate on the European Day of Languages, when everybody would wheel out their own favourite sentences in some other language, and that all went onto the record.

There has been quite a wide variety of languages used right from the very beginning. One of the very earliest experiences of that was in the early 2000s when we studied an education bill that was very pertinent to Gaelic, and we had a lot of witnesses using Gaelic. In fact, it's in committees, really, that most Gaelic is used, when witnesses come along and give evidence. That is interpreted, and then of course, that is all included on the record.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Do the Chamber and committees have permanent translation infrastructure, or are there temporary booths on request?

● (1140)

Ms. Ruth Connelly (Head of Broadcasting, Scottish Parliament): We have two permanent double booths that can take two interpreters in each. We have six committee rooms in the Scottish Parliament where we can have six committees meeting simultaneously. The two largest committee rooms—that's rooms 1 and 2—also have two double booths in them, and they are used.

We actually provide an interpretation service quite regularly because the presiding officer regularly has visitors from other countries to the VIP gallery for, say, first minister's question time, so we are regularly working with these interpreters. The visiting delegation brings their own interpreters, and Linda isn't required to book interpreters, so we work with them quite regularly.

I agree with Mr. Williams on one point about interpreters working remotely. They don't like that, but we have had occasion to do that because we've done some events where we have had multiple languages spoken. We set up 12 booths in another room and just fed the video to these interpreters in their individual booths. We gave them each a separate television monitor so that they could see, because interpreters don't like not having clear lines of sight, and they won't work with just audio either. It's such an intensive and highly pressurized job that it's better if they're actually in or adjacent to the room that they're interpreting from.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: If someone wants to speak a language that you're not able to provide interpretation for in a timely manner, would you accept for them to provide a written translation into English of what they intend to say, for someone to read from that booth?

Ms. Ruth Connelly: Bronwyn can maybe answer this, but I think the answer to that would be yes.

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: Yes, I think so, certainly if it were a member, for example, who wanted to do that. In fact, that's exactly what happened with the minister who delivered part of his speech in Norwegian. He gave us the Norwegian text and the English text, and that's what we used. Yes, we have done that.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Who would be the person reading that into the record? Would it be the minister's staff? Would there be someone provided whose job it would be to read the translated statement, or would it be an official interpreter?

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: It was interpreted at the time, but I have to say, from the point of view of *Hansard*, we used what the minister gave us.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Okay.

If somebody were to speak a language that wasn't expected in the Chamber and obviously couldn't provide the interpretation for, would it still be translated for the *Hansard*?

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: If people are going to use a language that we can't find an interpreter for, and if it's not a huge, long, 10-minute speech—if they just want to say a few paragraphs or something—we will encourage them to speak in that language but then to say, "This is what I said," and repeat it in English. That's how we get around that one.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: But if they don't do that, you don't proactively look for someone who speaks the language to transcribe it.

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: No, we don't.

Mr. David de Burgh Graham: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Next up we have Mr. Reid for five minutes.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston, CPC): We're in five-minute rounds now?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Blake Richards): Yes, we're in five-minute rounds, but if you need a little more time, we had some of the rounds in the beginning that didn't get used fully, so I don't imagine there is an issue there.

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you.

I want to turn to our friends from Scotland.

First of all, welcome, and thank you for staying up late.

I don't know if they have our riding names listed here, but I represent a district called Lanark—Frontenac—Kingston. As you can tell from the Lanark part, it's an area of Scottish settlement. I live in the town of Perth, so I have a deep affection for our ancestral language.

I want to ask you a question, as a starting point, to get a sense of how many people have a need and an ability. If we compare Scotland to its nearest counterpart, to Ireland, we see that there are about 57,000 native Gaelic speakers in Scotland and about 75,000 in Ireland. However, in Ireland, because of their education program, there are also—at least in principle, according to census data—about 1.8 million people who can speak it as a second language.

Is there something parallel in Scotland, or is the number of second-language speakers much lower?

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: Do you have the numbers for it, Linda?

Ms. Linda Orton: I don't have them with me, but it's around about 80,000 who have knowledge or a skill in Gaelic, of whom around about half have written ability, and around about half have spoken ability.

● (1145)

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: Yes.

Ms. Linda Orton: So, yes, it's about 1% of the population who have some ability to speak, and it's about half of that who can actually read Gaelic as well. The numbers are very small. UNESCO classifies it as an endangered language.

Mr. Scott Reid: Right.

In Ireland, assuming that everybody really does have the language ability that they claim—people can be generous in interpreting their own language ability, and that may be true of your Norwegian-speaking minister as well, I don't know—I'd have a one-in-four chance of being understood by an average member of the Dáil. That would be much less true of the Scottish Parliament, where you'd essentially have a one-in-fifty chance of being understood by a typical member there.

I assume the speakers are both from the Outer Hebrides—the members of the Parliament who are Gaelic speakers?

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: One is from the Outer Hebrides; the other is from the Highlands.

Mr. Scott Reid: All right.

Your electoral system is different from the one we have. This may be an unfair question, so if you can't answer it, just say so.

Has this appeared to have had any impact on the selection of candidates? Are they more or less likely to get people who are Gaelic speakers being put forward by their parties than would otherwise be the case, or has anyone indicated that this is the case as they select their list of candidates?

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: Gosh, not that I am aware of, no.

Ms. Linda Orton: Not that I am aware of either.

Ms. Ruth Connelly: We don't think so.

Mr. Scott Reid: That's a fair answer.

Our goal here in Canada is to try to find a way of incorporating our indigenous languages, languages spoken by the people who were native here before Europeans arrived. They all had spoken languages. None of them had written languages before Europeans arrived. One of the consequences of the fact that you often had a language group spoken over a wide geographic area that was settled by different groups of Europeans was that different writing systems were adopted for the same language group. This is a big issue for the Cree speakers, for example. The Cree are spread across an area the size of western Europe, and they have two writing systems, the Latin alphabet versus something called syllabics.

Of course, Gaelic has a long written history, going back to the Middle Ages. Is there consensus for a single form of written Gaelic?

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: Yes, there is, I think. I know that there is more of an issue with vocabulary, but there doesn't seem to have been any difficulty with establishing a writing system, certainly one that everybody who works with us on Gaelic can agree on. I'm not aware that there have been any problems with that.

Mr. Scott Reid: I raise this because you talked about oral testimony and you talked about someone submitting their remarks in writing in English for the benefit of the translator. Do you ever get written testimony in Gaelic?

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: Well, I'm not sure about Gaelic, but I think it is possible for witnesses to submit written evidence to committees in any language they like, and it will be translated.

That already happens, doesn't it?

Ms. Linda Orton: Yes, and the translation in English would be part of the record, not the original language.

Mr. Scott Reid: Right. But presumably the original document would stay as part of the journals of the committee, if somebody absolutely had to go back to confirm the accuracy of translation.

Ms. Linda Orton: Yes.

Mr. Scott Reid: Okay, That makes sense.

I think I'm just about out of time.

Mr. Chairman, if there's a possibility of a third round, I might ask to come back.

Mr. Blake Richards: We'll certainly add you to the list, if that possibility comes up, and I think it may.

Mr. Simms, we'll move to you next.

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Williams, interpreters of course have to go through a lot of barriers, as far as certification goes and as far as your council is concerned. With the level of expertise of interpreters and translators, the wages are fairly high. Is there a pan-national organization or union, one that exists for the entire nation?

● (1150)

Mr. Malcolm Williams: No.

Mr. Scott Simms: What you're saying, then, is that there is a myriad of organizations that tie the interpreters together; is that correct?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: That's right.

Mr. Scott Simms: And is this...I can't say collective bargaining, but do they negotiate, in a way, for the rates that are—?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: That's right.

Mr. Scott Simms: They do, whether for the courts individually —?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: Yes that's a good example. The ministry of the Attorney General of Ontario has different rates for community interpreters. In B.C., the ministry of the Attorney General has established a higher rate for certified legal interpreters and a lower rate for legal interpreters who are not certified.

Mr. Scott Simms: So there are several levels of this, based on proficiency.

Mr. Malcolm Williams: There are two levels, based on certification or non-certification.

Mr. Scott Simms: So it's not based on experience but on certification.

Can the certification vary from province to province?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: In that particular case, in B.C. the certification is provided by our provincial affiliate.

Mr. Scott Simms: Now predominantly, of course, in this country when we talk about certifications or rate of pay or collective agreements, to the degree they exist, it's always based on the English-French paradigm.

Mr. Malcolm Williams: That's correct.

Mr. Scott Simms: What is the situation regarding indigenous languages? Does this area fall under the same form, or is there something different for this when it comes to certification or rate of pay?

Mr. Malcolm Williams: For interpreters, it's all based on the length of the speech or the length of the dialogue; we're not counting words anymore, if that's what you're getting at. I'm not sure whether....

Mr. Scott Simms: I guess what I'm asking is whether the paradigm by which interpreters exist, when it comes to certification, primarily, is the same for those who put themselves forward as indigenous language interpreters.

Mr. Malcolm Williams: It's the same paradigm, because they'll be working from or into their language.

Mr. Scott Simms: Our study is based on seeing how we can incorporate more indigenous languages into our Parliament. They will follow, then, the same rate of pay and the same levels of certification and so on and so forth as interpreters putting themselves forward as English-French translators.

Mr. Malcolm Williams: I would expect that to be the case. Yes.

Mr. Scott Simms: That's all I wanted to know.

I have a genuine interest here, because, of course, there is a very small part of the population of Canada with indigenous languages.

For our friends in Scotland, I understand that there is what I'll call a dialect called "Shetlandic". Is that correct?

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Ruth Connelly: What place did you hear that about?

Mr. Scott Simms: Pardon me?

Ms. Ruth Connelly: I'm sorry. We had to mute you for a minute, because our division bell was going off calling members to vote.

Mr. Scott Simms: That's all right; I am muted often. It's okay.

Ms. Ruth Connelly: I was just asking what place you had heard that about. We'll need to check that one, I think.

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: People in Shetland do speak a pretty...is it a dialect? I'm not sure. It's certainly very broad—

Mr. Scott Simms: It's used in poetry a lot, I understand.

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: It is, and it's very broad. It has a very specific vocabulary. Much of it is quite related to Norwegian and Scandinavian languages, because there's a lot of Scandinavian influence, and obviously—

Mr. Scott Simms: The similarities are there. As I mentioned to Mr. Williams about indigenous languages being very small, obviously 1% of the population speaking in Gaelic is a very, very small portion of the population. If I said to you that I want to speak in Shetland when I stand up in the House, how do you make accommodations despite the size of the population that speaks that language?

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: I think if someone spoke in Shetland, it would be a bit like someone speaking in Scots or Doric or something like that. It would simply be included in the record because it is very close to English. It's not sufficiently different. You're going to get different spellings and you're going to get odd vocabulary words that are unusual, but fundamentally, if you speak English, you can understand Shetland, so it's not that radically different.

There's a range of languages in Scotland that we just include and people can use as and when they want. The Shetland dialect would be one; Scots is another; Doric is another.

Mr. Scott Simms: Where I come from in Newfoundland, sometimes we need interpretation, so I have an affinity with the Shetland people.

● (1155)

Ms. Ruth Connelly: I have a brother-in-law who's a Shetlander. I understand him.

Mr. Scott Simms: Good, and I'm glad you understood me. Thank you.

Mr. Blake Richards: Thanks, Mr. Simms, and leave it to you to say what everyone's thinking, I suppose.

Mr. Scott Simms: Right.

Mr. Blake Richards: We'll go back to Mr. Reid for a final round of questioning.

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you very much. My ex-wife was from Newfoundland and we also had a language barrier between us.

Mr. Scott Simms: This is getting worse.

Mr. Scott Reid: While you were talking, Mr. Simms, I was looking up the Shetland dialect. It turns out there's a radio station that broadcasts in it, at least according to Wikipedia. I did not know this until just now.

I wanted to ask about the two-week delay in terms of getting an interpreter. I can see why that's true for Norwegian or for a number of European languages. Is that also true for the Gaelic interpreter, as well?

Ms. Linda Orton: Yes, that would be preferred, just because there are only four or five Gaelic interpreters who we can use, so it's really to guarantee their availability.

Mr. Scott Reid: I can see why that's preferred and I can see how, with a committee meeting like this, where you were scheduled a significant amount of time in advance, if one of you had wanted to demonstrate how the whole thing works by means of having one of those interpreters, it all would have worked.

Obviously when you're dealing with the proceedings of the House itself, that would be a very different story. Debates move around for other.... Unless you're very different from the way we operate, it's hard to tell a day in advance for sure that you'll be debating this or that subject, and then things happen. To use a contemporary example from our own House, someone just passed away—one of our members, yesterday—and there were a number of tributes to that individual. Had it been a situation in which it would have been appropriate to use the Gaelic language for something like that, would you be able to accommodate that on short notice, or would that not be possible?

Ms. Linda Orton: We would do our best to accommodate it. Whether it's possible depends on the availability of interpreters, and that's always the case because we don't hire interpreters within the Parliament itself.

Mr. Scott Reid: Right. The two-week lead time, is that based in part on the assumption that the individual, the interpreter, will actually be physically present in the Parliament?

Ms. Linda Orton: Yes, it would be.

Mr. Scott Reid: If you went to a remote interpretation model, which is one of the things we've been discussing here in Canada.... You do find that some of our indigenous languages are relatively easy to accommodate within the capital. I know the name doesn't mean anything to you, but Inuktitut is a widely spoken indigenous language. Ottawa has an easy air link to Nunavut. It's a different story if you get one of the west coast indigenous languages, where people live 3,000 kilometres away.

I wanted to ask if you have you looked at the possibility of remote interpretation.

Ms. Linda Orton: If the interpreters were located remotely, then, yes, I'm sure we would, but at the moment most of the interpreters are in Glasgow, so it doesn't particularly follow. When we have a meeting that's more remote, we would take the interpreters with us, as the MSPs would travel to the venue.

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: We also have an extra requirement of interpreters in that, once the meeting is over and they're done with interpreting, we bring them back to actually transcribe the Gaelic for us, because in *Hansard* we actually have, or we will shortly have, only one fluent Gaelic speaker. The interpreters actually do the Gaelic transcription for us, too.

Mr. Scott Reid: I just want to be clear about that, because this is another issue that's come up here. We have talked about the need to have the written record reflect what was said, but our assumption has been that the written record in English and in French, which is our other official language, would record that which was spoken originally in Inuktitut or Cree or Coast Salish, or whatever it happens to be. I assume your *Hansard* similarly is in English? You don't have a Gaelic version?

Ms. Bronwyn Brady: It is. We don't do a Gaelic translation of it, but we include the Gaelic in the running line of the *Hansard*, if you like. When somebody speaks Gaelic, we put the Gaelic in first, and then we'll put the interpretation in after that so it's all included.

Sorry, I think our lights have just gone off because we haven't been moving.

● (1200)

Mr. Scott Reid: We can hear you, though. We can no longer see you, but we can hear you.

Mr. Scott Reid: I hate to say this, but it reminds me of Scottish weather from when I was there. You could hear people, but not always see them.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Ms. Ruth Connelly: It's exactly like that. The vagaries of a Scottish day we're putting it down to.

Mr. Scott Reid: Thank you very much. Once again, all my time is used up, and I really appreciate the evidence you've given today. Thank you.

The Chair: I'd like to thank our witnesses very much. This has been a very interesting addition to our study, from our last witnesses.

Malcolm, thank you as well.

I would just remind members that we will meet on Tuesday and we'll do e-petitions. The Clerk of the House will be here in the first hour, and in the second hour we'll do our report on this, or give instructions to the drafters, so we have to think about that.

On May 23, even though we're going to do the report, we will get the clerk of the Northern Territory legislative assembly. Remember that was going to be in the evening, and David suggested it be on the Wednesday because there are usually votes on Wednesday, so we're already here. That's May 23 in the evening. Is that okay with everyone? If there are any additions to the report from that, we would just throw them in. Okay?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay.

The subcommittee on sexual harassment will probably be finished on Tuesday, so that report has to come to us.

The meeting is adjourned.

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